



Reducing Chronic Absence: What Will It Take?



Salt Lake City, Utah



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Unpacking Attendance Terms

Average Daily Attendance

- The % of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.

Truancy

- Typically refers only to unexcused absences and is defined by each state under No Child Left Behind. It signals the potential need for legal intervention under state compulsory education laws.

Chronic Absence

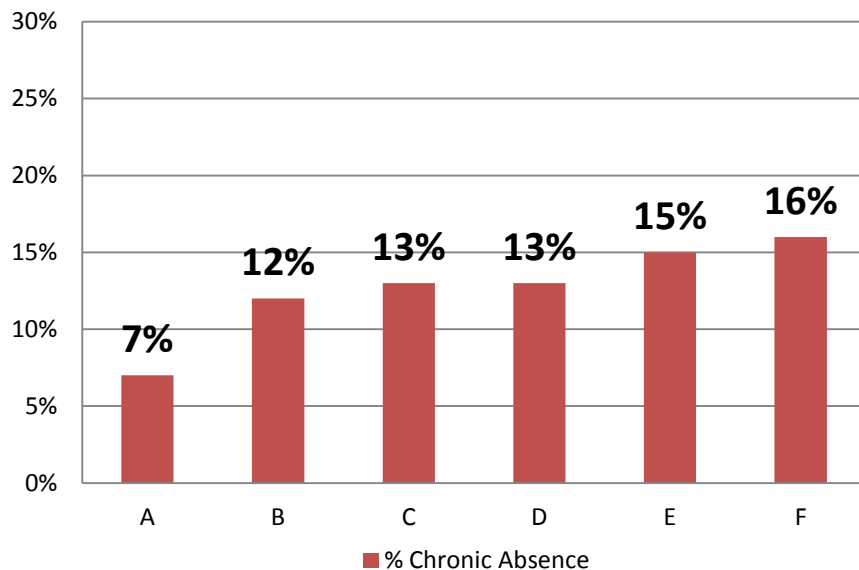
- Missing 10% or more of school for any reason – excused, unexcused, etc. It is an indication that a student is academically at risk due to missing too much school starting in Kindergarten.



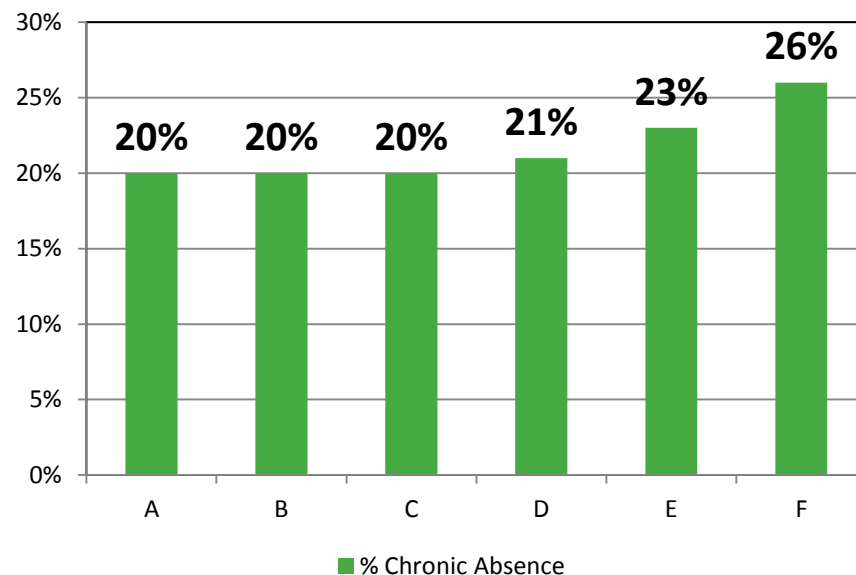
High Levels of ADA Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

Chronic Absence For 6 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with @ 95% ADA in 2012



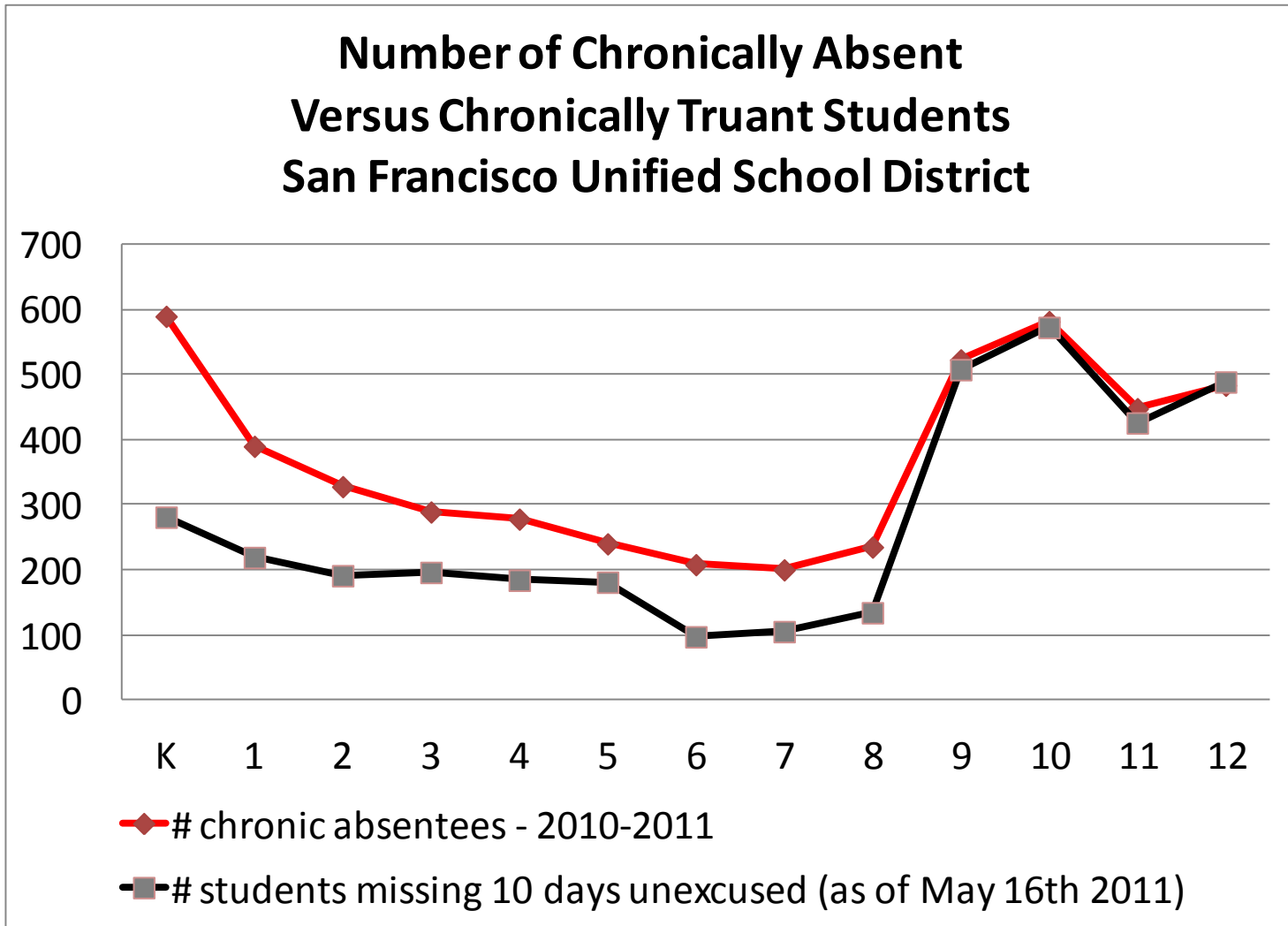
Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12



98% ADA = little chronic absence
95% ADA = don't know
93% ADA = significant chronic absence

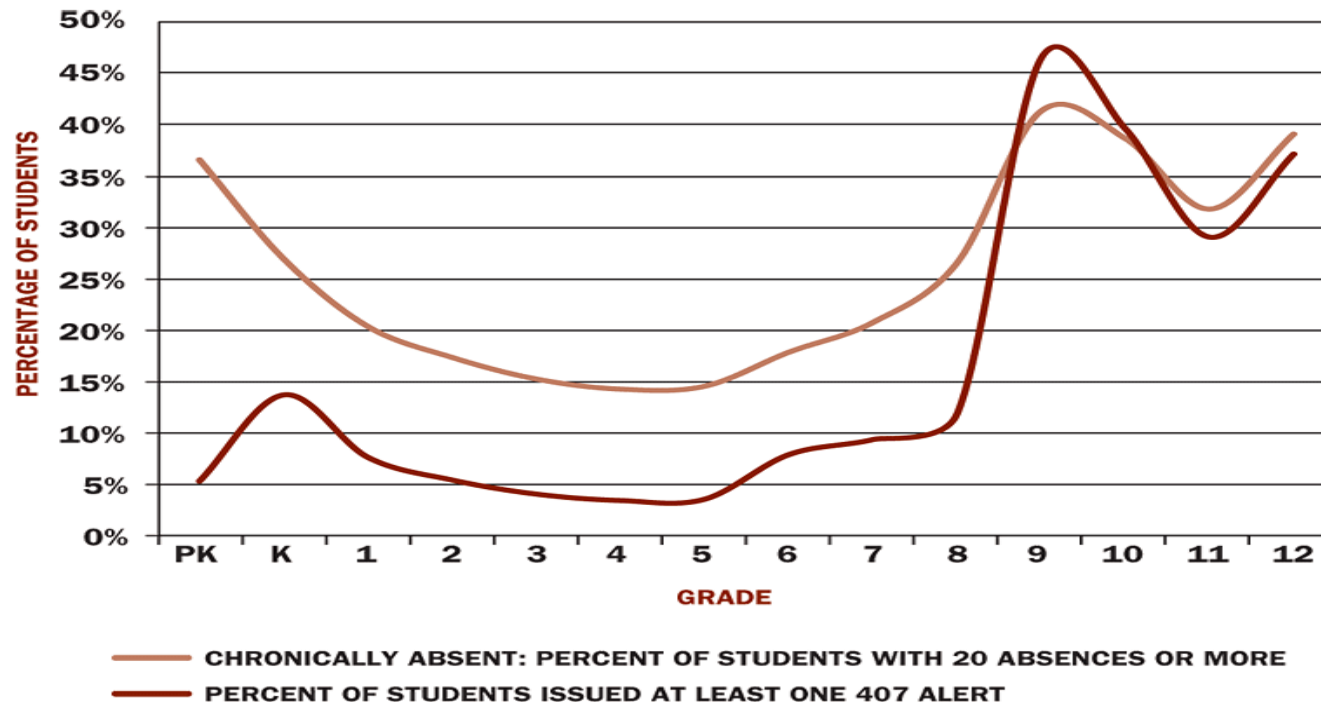


Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence



Sporadic – Not Just Consecutive – Absences Matter

New York City Schools (2008)



- A 407 alert is issued when a student misses 10 consecutive days or 20 days over a 40 day period. It misses more sporadic absence.
- 1 out of 5 elementary school children were chronically absent.

Source: Nauer, K. et al, *Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families*, Center for New York City Affairs New School, Oct 2008

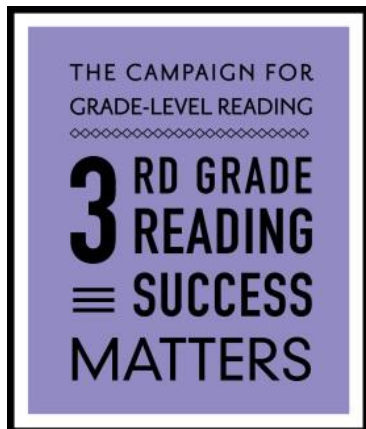


Chronic Absence: A Hidden National Crisis

- ❑ Nationwide, as many as 10-15% of students (7.5 million) miss nearly a month of school every year. That's 135 million days of lost time in the classroom.
- ❑ In some cities, as many as one in four students are missing that much school.
- ❑ Chronic absenteeism is a red alert that students are headed for academic trouble and eventually for dropping out of high school.
- ❑ Poor attendance isn't just a problem in high school. It can start as early as kindergarten and pre-kindergarten.



The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

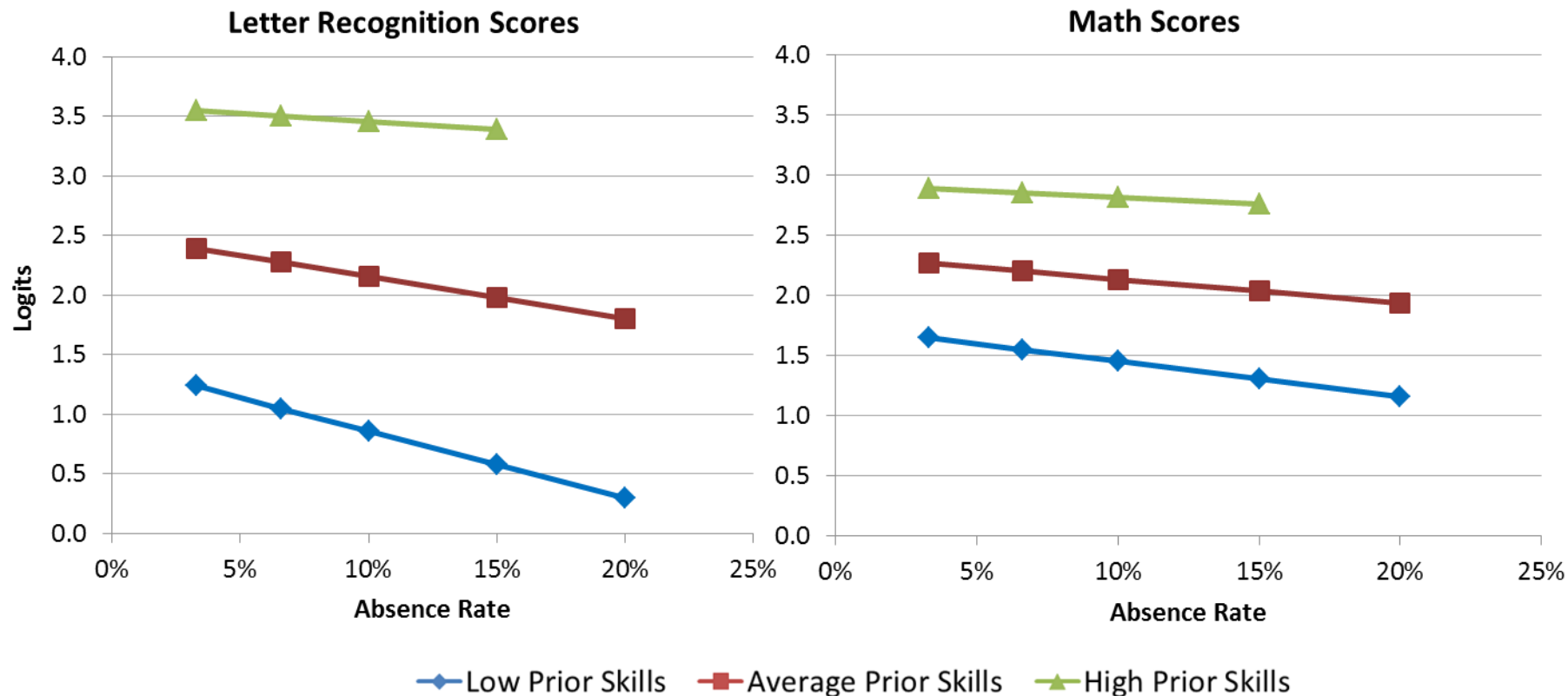


The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is focusing on three challenges to reading success that are amenable to community solutions:

- **The Readiness Gap:** Too many children from low-income families begin school already far behind.
- **The Attendance Gap (Chronic Absence):** Too many children from low-income families miss too many days of school.
- **The Summer Slide (Summer Learning Loss):** Too many children lose ground over the summer months.

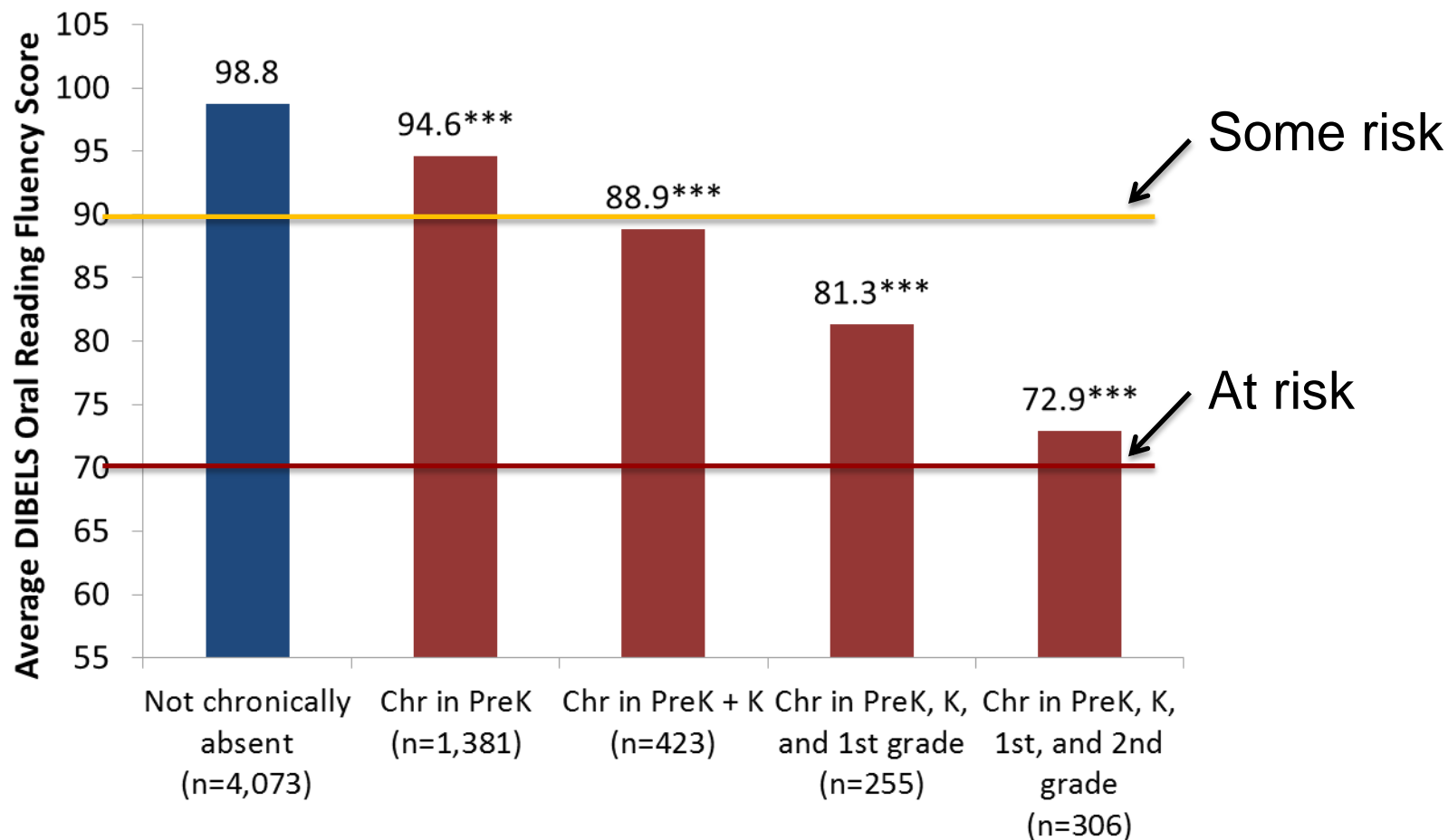


Starting in preK, chronic absence affects learning and school readiness. Attendance matters most for the children who enter the farthest behind.



Analyses control for prior preschool experience, race, gender, neighborhood poverty and social status, special education status, ELL status, and program type. Missing data points represent values with fewer than 30 students.

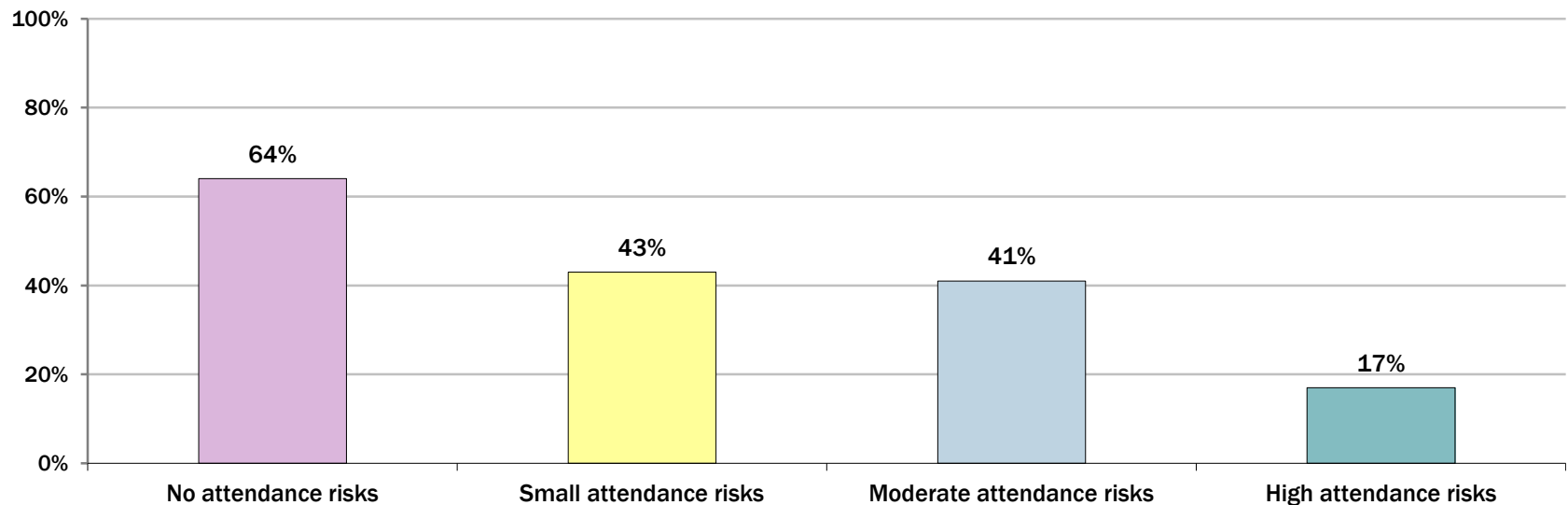
Students with more years of chronic absenteeism, starting in preK have lower 2nd grade scores



* Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten and 1st Grade are Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3rd Grade

Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3rd Grade ELA Based on Attendance in Kindergarten and in 1st Grade



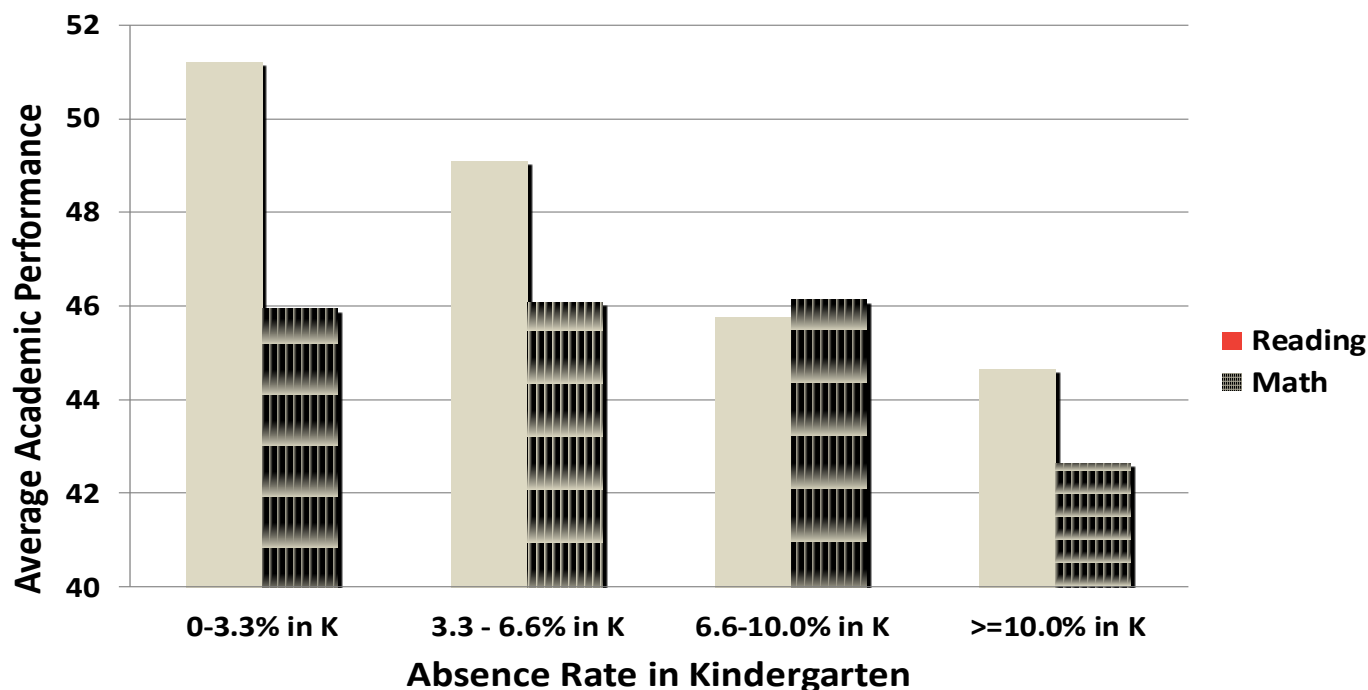
No risk	Missed less than 5% of school in K & 1 st
Small risk	Missed 5-9% of days in both K & 1 st
Moderate risk	Missed 5-9% of days in 1 year & 10 % in 1 year
High risk	Missed 10% or more in K & 1 st

Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)



The Long-Term Impact of Chronic Kindergarten Absence is Most Troubling for Poor Children

5th Grade Math and Reading performance by K attendance for children living in poverty. Academic performance was lower even if attendance had improved in 3rd grade.



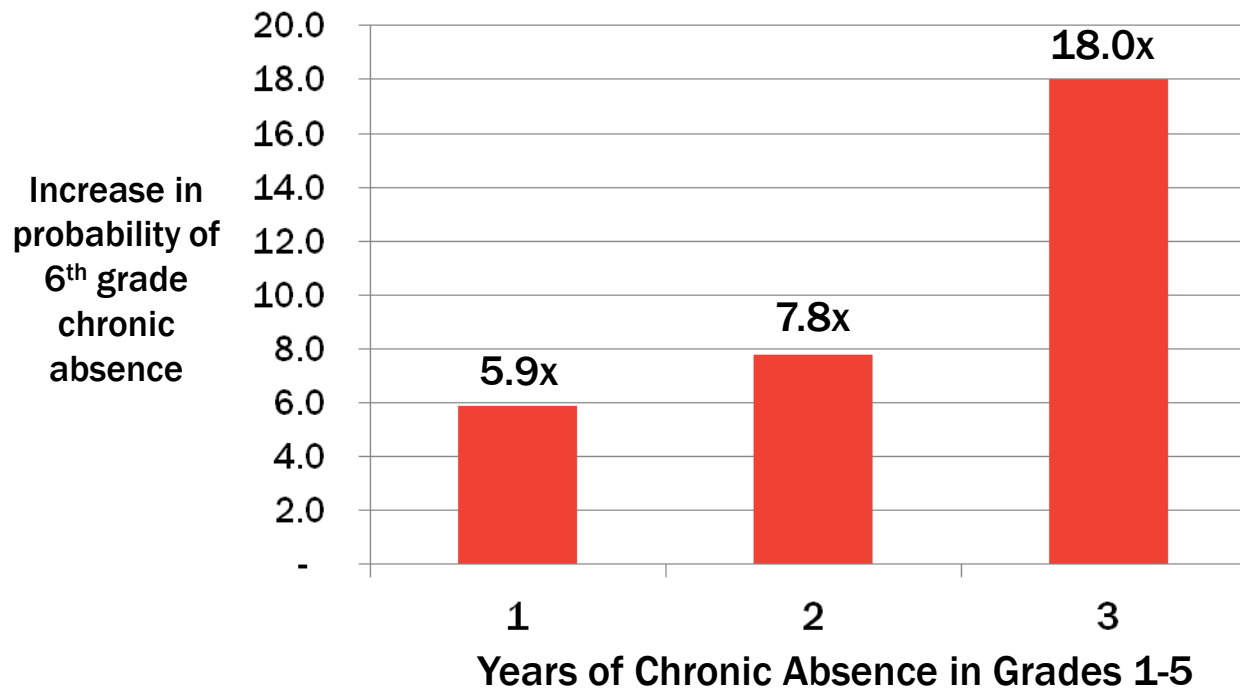
Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)

Note: Average academic performance reflects results of direct cognitive assessments conducted for ECLS-K.



Multiple Years of Elementary Chronic Absence = Worse Middle School Outcomes

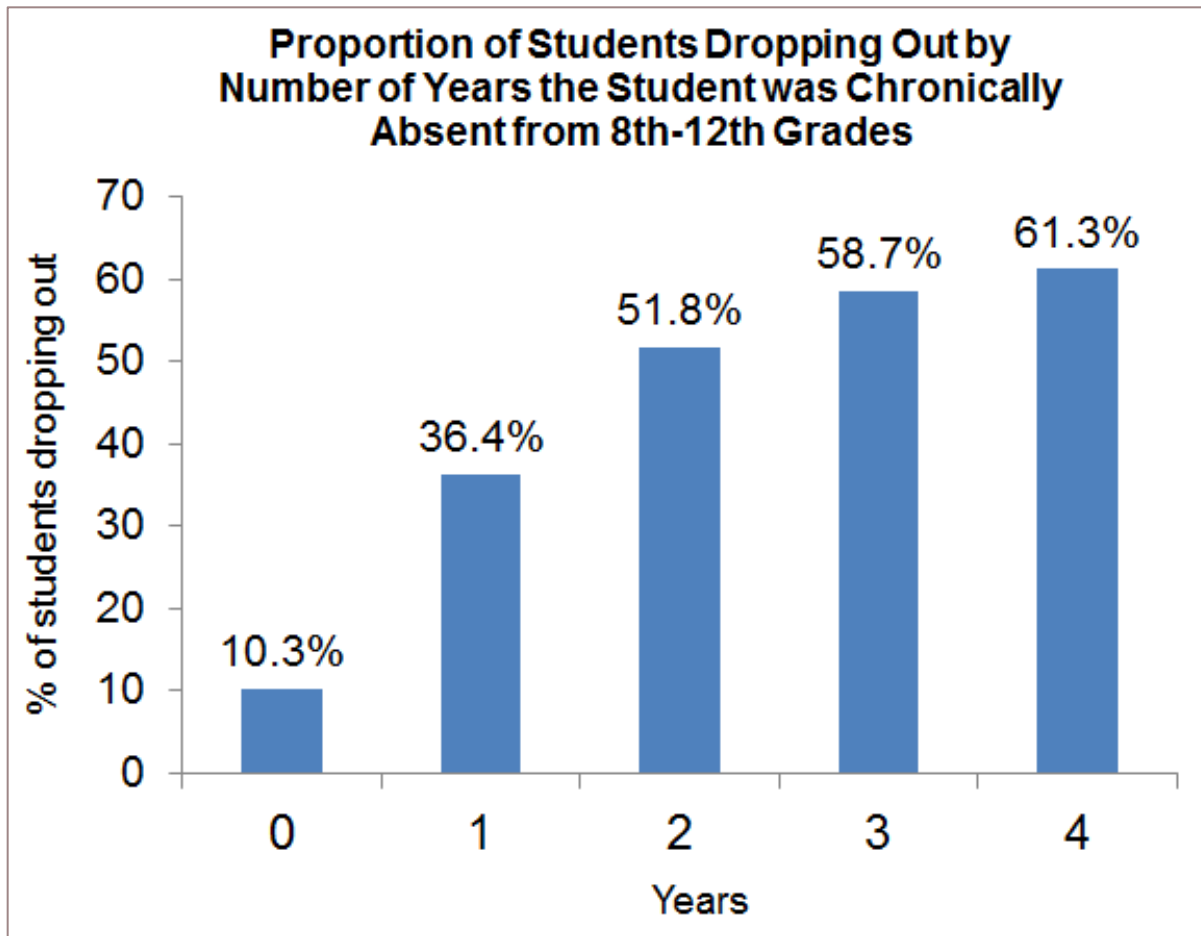
Each year of chronic absence in elementary school is associated with a substantially higher probability of chronic absence in 6th grade



Chronic absence in 1st grade is also associated with:

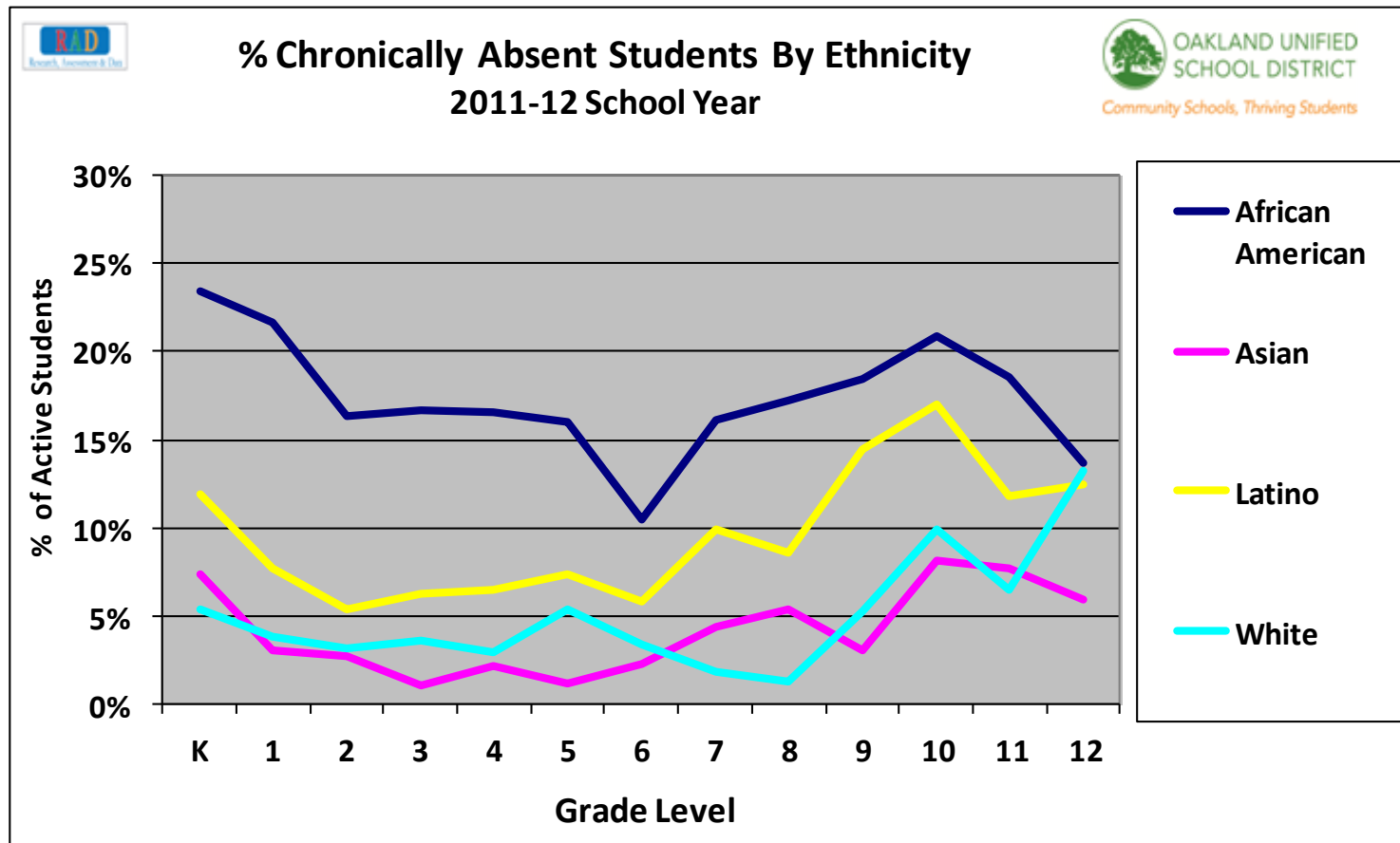
- Lower 6th grade test scores
- Higher levels of suspension

The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative



With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

Reducing Chronic Absence is Key to Reducing the Achievement Gap



Why Are Students Chronically Absent?

Myths

Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused

Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren't a problem

Attendance only matters in the older grades

Barriers

Lack of access to health care

Poor transportation

No safe path to school

Aversion

Child struggling academically

Lack of engaging instruction

Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline

Parents had negative school experience

Going to School Every Day Reflects...

Hope

for a better future

+

Faith

that school will help you or your child succeed

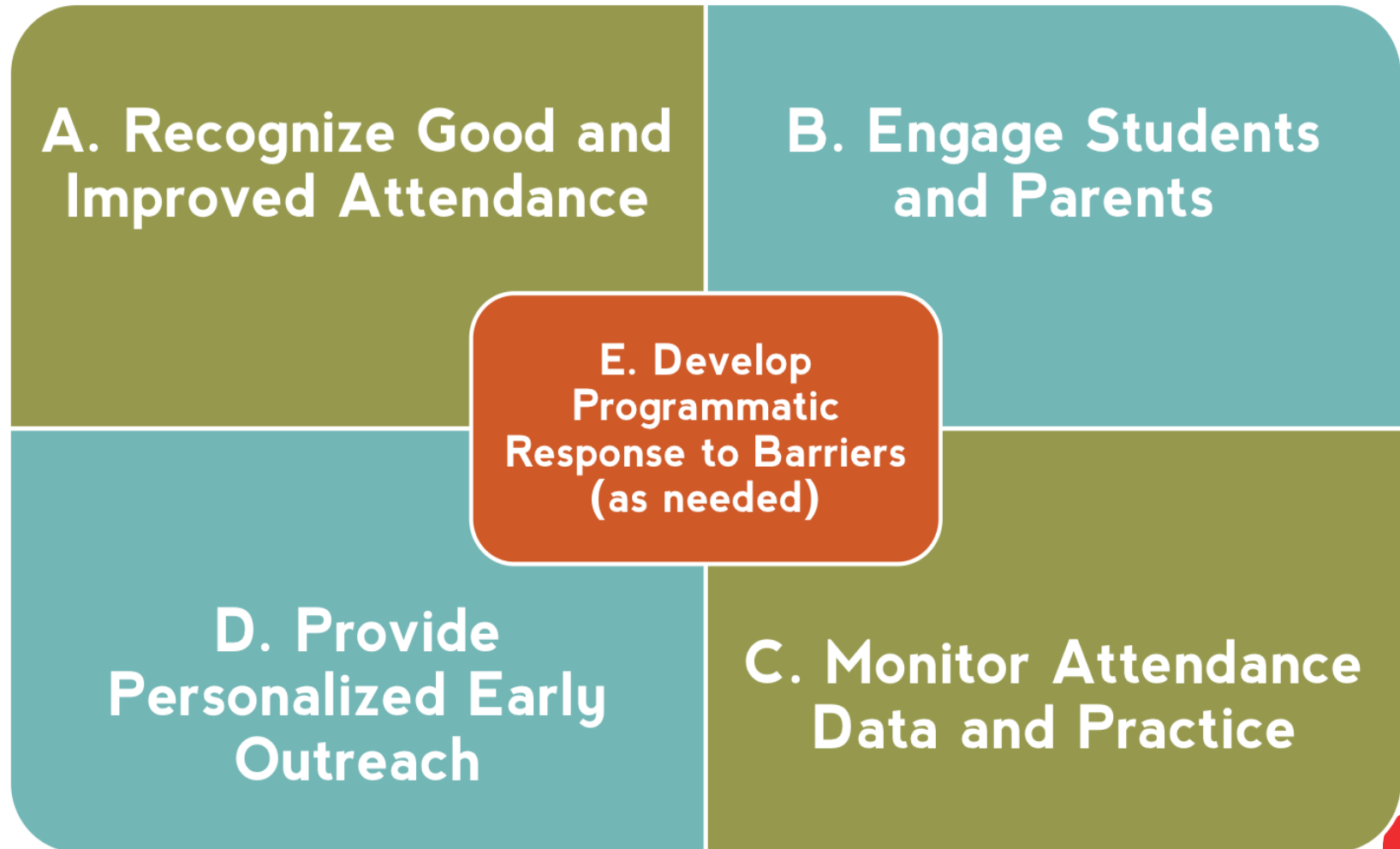
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Capacity

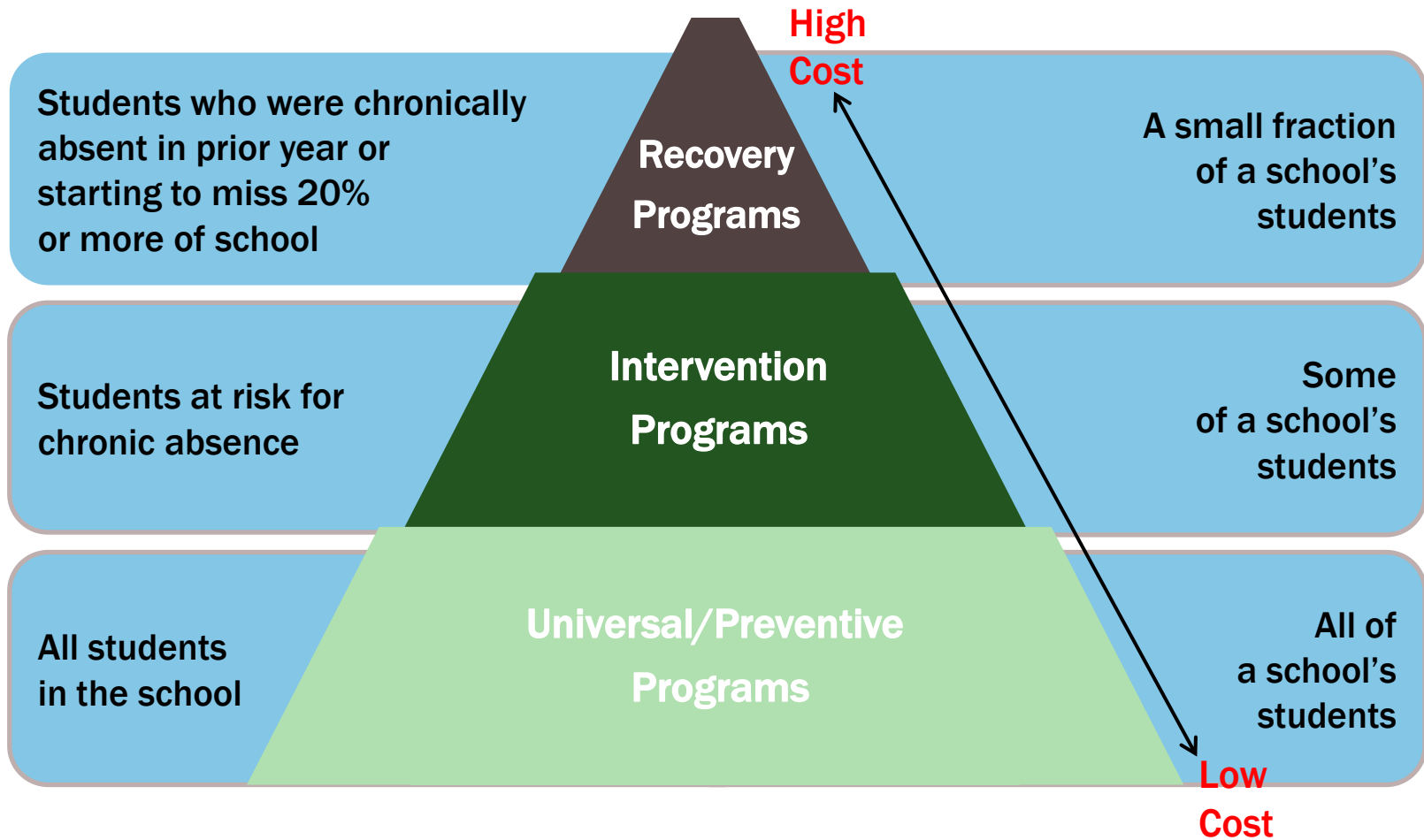
Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school



Universal Strategies for Building a Culture of Attendance & Identifying Barriers



Increased Attendance Involves a 3-Tiered Approach that Fits with Most Reform Efforts



Variation Across Schools Helps Identify Good Practice and Need for Intervention

Chronic Absence Levels Among Oakland Public Schools (2009-10)

	Elementary	Middle	High School
# Schools with 0%-5% Chronic Absence	9	0	0
# Schools with 5.1%-10% Chronic Absence	17	4	1
# Schools with 10.1%-20% Chronic Absence	25	8	6
# Schools with >20.1% Chronic Absence	9	4	9
Total No. Schools	60	16	16
Highest % of Chronic Absence	31.5%	32.8%	42.1%
Lowest % of Chronic Absence	0.3%	6.9%	7.9%
Median	12.7%	14.9%	21.0%
Mean	11.9%	15.6%	22.4%

Examples of Successful Efforts



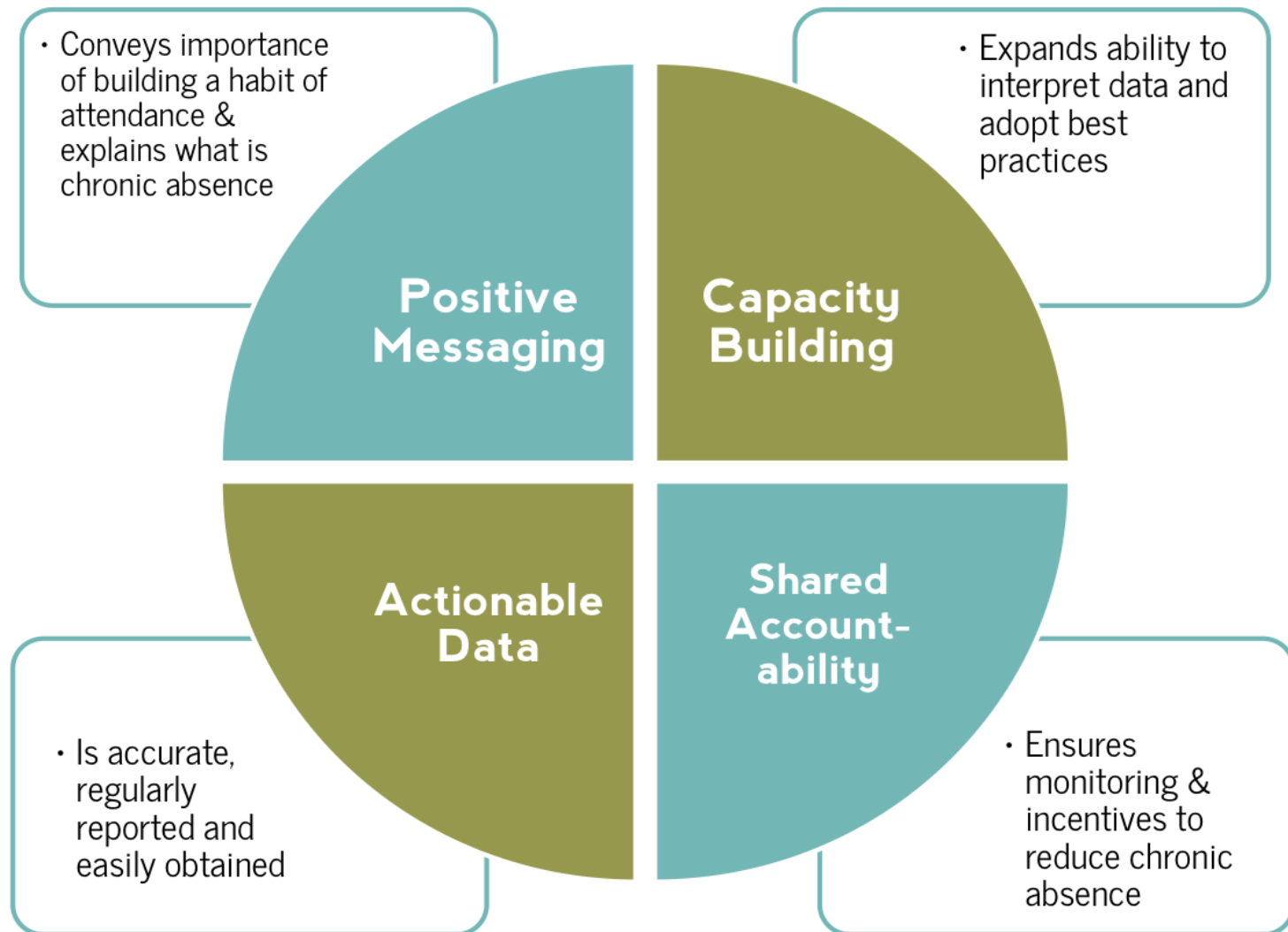
New York City: Citywide interagency task force led by Mayor; “NYC Success Mentor Corp.”, largest school-based mentoring effort in nation reaching about 9,000 at-risk students; interagency data sharing; community impact strategies; celebrity WakeUp! NYC calls; incentives & public-private partnerships. Pilot **reduced chronic absenteeism in elementary, middle and high schools**, outperforming comparison schools. Students with Success Mentors **gained more than 11,800 days of school**.



Baltimore: Fewer unnecessary suspensions, reduced middle school transitions, expanded monitoring of attendance data, and a citywide campaign have **helped cut middle school chronic absence in half**. Baltimore is now turning its attention to preschool and elementary school and to public messaging.



Ingredients for Success & Sustainability in a District and Community



The Superintendents Call to Action

**Own the
Issue**

**Mobilize
the
Community**

**Drive With
Data**

*To sign-up for the Call to Action, or to learn more, please visit:
www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action*



Chronic Absence =

The Warning Light On A Car Dashboard

The Parallels



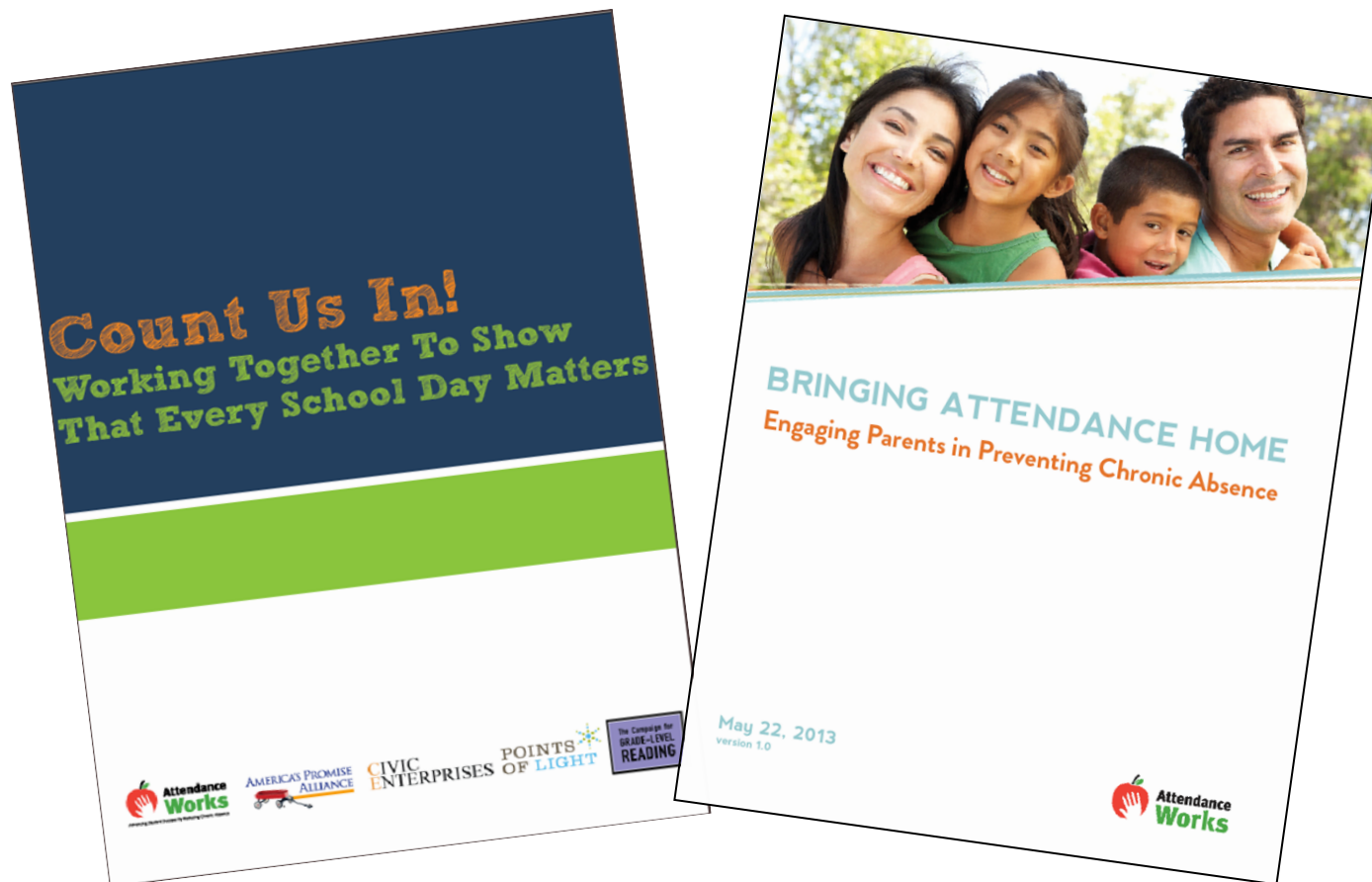
- Don't ignore it even though most do!
- Address early or potentially pay more (lots more) later.
- The key is to ask why is this blinking? What could this mean?

Why September Counts

- The beginning of school is when expectations and norms are set for the year.
- The more days of instruction a student misses, the larger the negative impact on achievement.
- Chronic absence is missing **10%** of days which would be **2 days** by the end of the first month of school. Schools could use this as a trigger to intervene before students fall so far behind they need more intensive remediation.



Join us in September for Attendance Awareness Month



<http://www.attendanceworks.org/attendancemonth/>

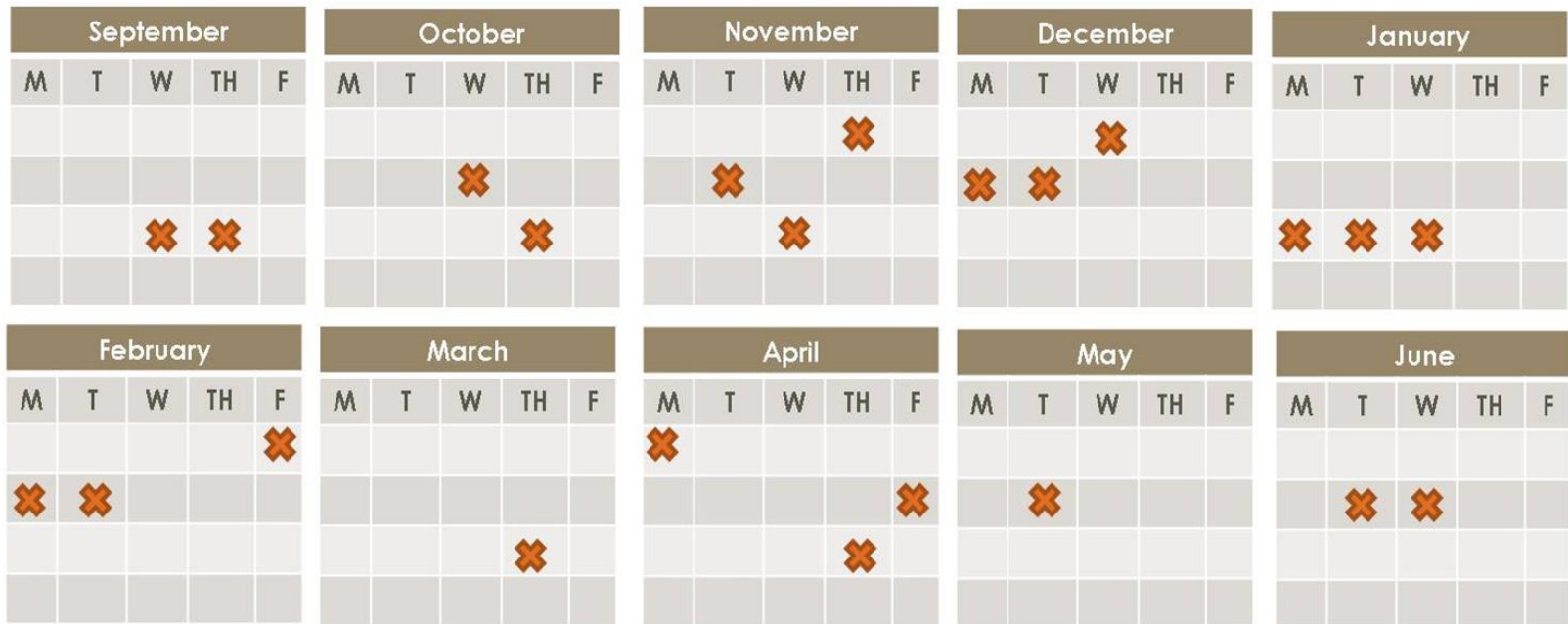
Key Messages

Key Message #1: Good attendance helps children do well in school and eventually in the work place.



Key Messages

Key Message #2: Absences add up. Excused and unexcused absences result in too much time lost in the classroom.



Key Messages

Key Message #3: Chronic absence, missing 10 percent of the school year or more, affects the whole classroom, not just the students who miss school.



Key Messages

Key Message #4: We need to monitor how many days each student misses school for *any* reason — excused, unexcused or suspensions — so we can intervene early.

Which students at this school are at risk?			
List of All Grade K -5 Students with Chronic or Severe Chronic Absence			
Elementary School			
2010-2011			
First Name	Middle Name/Initial	Last Name	Absence Type
STUDENT		A	satisfactory
STUDENT		B	satisfactory
STUDENT		C	chronic
STUDENT		D	at risk
STUDENT		E	satisfactory
STUDENT		F	satisfactory
STUDENT		G	at risk
STUDENT		H	satisfactory
STUDENT		I	satisfactory
STUDENT		J	satisfactory
STUDENT		K	satisfactory
STUDENT		L	at risk
STUDENT		M	at risk

Key Messages

Key Message #5: Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when the whole community, including parents and schools, gets involved.



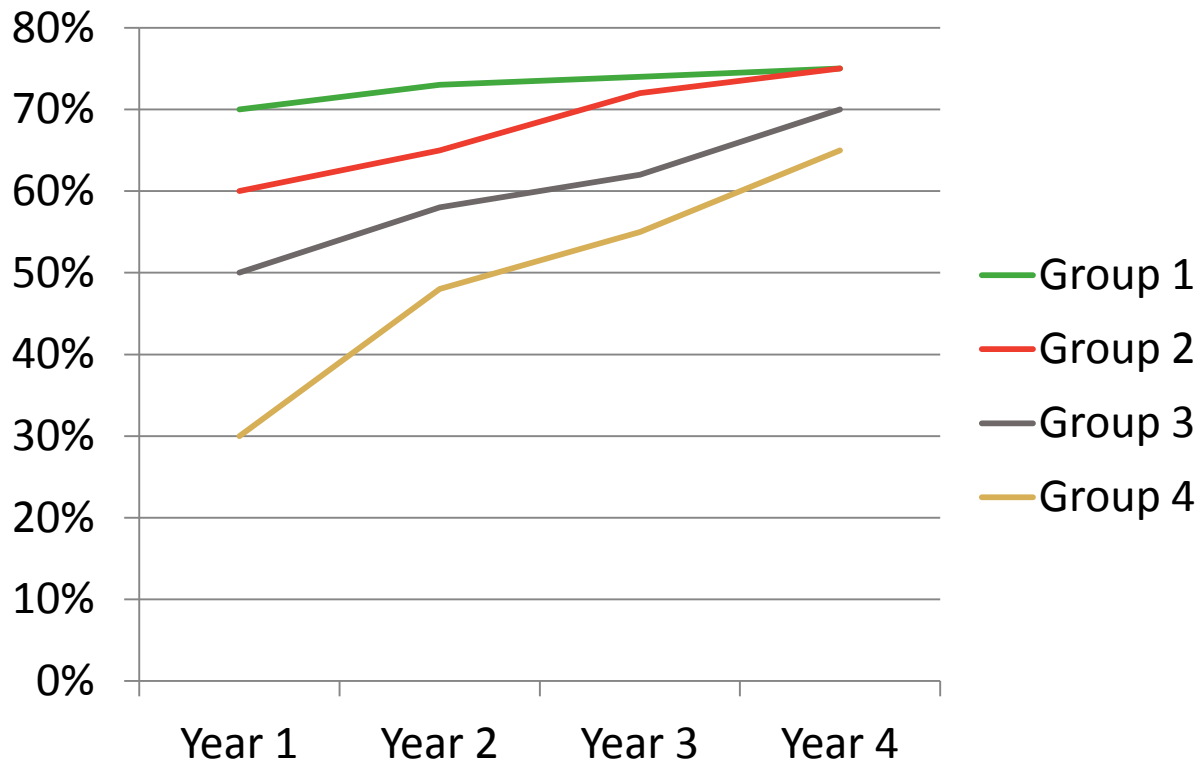
Key Messages

Key Message #6: Relationship building is fundamental to any strategy for improving student attendance.



Key Messages

Key Message #7: Reducing chronic absence can help close achievement gaps.



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